

Claims:

1. A method of providing digital content to consumers, comprising:
receiving unique identification information associated with a prepaid digital content medium (PDCM) from a consumer distributor of said PDCM;
activating said PDCM based upon said unique identification information; and
sending confirmation of activation of said PDCM in response to a request for confirmation from a digital content provider, said digital content provider sending said request for confirmation in response to a request for said digital content by a consumer possessing said purchased PDCM.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said receiving step comprises:
receiving a digital signal comprising a serial number and personal identification number associated with said PDCM.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein said activating step comprises:
comparing said received identification information to identification information stored in a database; and
in response to said received and stored identification information matching, providing an indicia of activation for said PDCM.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein said activating step further comprises:
determining whether said PDCM has been purchased by a consumer; and
providing indicia of purchase associated with said PDCM.
5. The method of claim 4 further comprising rejecting activation from said consumer distributor in an instance where said received and stored identification information fails to match.
6. The method of claim 4 further comprising rejecting activation from said consumer distributor in an instance where said PDCM has not been purchased by a consumer.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said sending confirmation of activation of said PDCM comprises:

receiving an activation request from said digital content provider;
querying a database for an indicia of activation associated with said PDCM;

and

sending said confirmation of activation to said digital content provider in an instance said PDCM is activated.

8. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

sending notice of non-activation of said PDCM to said digital content provider in response to said request for confirmation from said digital content provider, in an instance where said PDCM is not activated.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said sending notice of non-activation of said PDCM comprises:

receiving an activation request from said digital content provider;
querying a database for an indicia of activation associated with said PDCM;

and

sending said notice of non-activation to said digital content provider in an instance said PDCM is not activated.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein said digital content provider sending said request for confirmation in response to a request for said digital content by a consumer possessing said purchased PDCM comprises:

receiving, at said digital content provider, said request for digital content from a consumer computer device associated with said consumer; and

downloading said digital content from said content provider to said consumer computer device in an instance where said PDCM is confirmed as being activated and said consumer is registered with said content provider.

11. A system for providing digital content, comprising:
 - a prepaid digital content medium (PDCM) comprising unique identification information thereon;
 - a PDCM consumer distributor for selling said PDCM;
 - a digital content provider for storing said digital content associated with said PDCM, said digital content provider adapted for communication with a consumer computer device to request and receive said digital content; and
 - an authentication service provider for maintaining corresponding identification information associated with said PDCM, said authentication service provider adapted to activate said PDCM upon receiving notice of purchase of said PDCM, said authentication service provider sending confirmation of activation of said PDCM in response to a request for confirmation from said digital content provider, wherein said digital content provider sends said request for confirmation in response to said consumer computer device requesting to receive said digital content from said service provider.
12. The system of claim 11, wherein said PDCM comprises a card having a magnetic strip.
13. The system of claim 12, wherein said PDCM consumer distributor further comprises a PDCM scanning device, said PDCM scanning device being capable of sending said unique identification information of said PDCM to said authentication service provider.
14. The system of claim 11, wherein said identification information of said PDCM comprises a serial number and a personal identification number.

15. The system of claim 11, wherein said digital content provider comprises:
 - a web server;
 - a storage device coupled to said web server, said storage device comprising digital content associated with said PDCM.
16. The system of claim 15, wherein said digital content provider further comprises:
 - an authentication, authorization, and accounting (AAA) server coupled to said storage device; and
 - a PDCM database stored in said storage device.
17. The system of claim 11, wherein said customer computer device comprises at least one of a desktop computer, a laptop, a PDA, and a cellular phone.
18. The system of claim 11, wherein said digital content comprises at least one of video, music, multi-media content, electronic books, and electronic data.
19. A method for providing digital content using a prepaid digital content medium (PDCM), comprising:
 - activating said PDCM at an authentication service provider in response to receiving identifying and purchase information associated with said PDCM from a distributor of said PDCM; and
 - providing said digital content to a computer device of a user from a digital content provider, in an instance where said user is registered with said digital content provider, and said identifying and purchasing information associated with said PDCM is reconfirmed as being activated by said authentication service provider.
20. The method of claim 19, wherein said digital content comprises at least one of video, music, multi-media content, electronic books, and electronic data.